

Aluzyjność jest swoistą formą doznań poetyckich. Trudności w jej recepcji spowodowane są brakiem nawyków. Richards twierdzi, że aluzyjność poezji wzmacniać się będzie niewątpliwie w twórczości pokoleń następnych. Generacja, dla której poeci piszą obecnie, nieuchronnie buduje swoją wyobraźnię przy pomocy bardziej zróżnicowanych elementów, niż to miało miejsce w przeszłości. Richards, zwolennik komunikatywności, nie jest przeciwnikiem poezji trudnej. Jego ulubionym poetą współczesnym jest T. S. Eliot, któremu już w drugim wydaniu swej pracy poświęca specjalny rozdział („Appendix B. The poetry of T. S. Eliot“). Wielki poeta angielski w początkach swej twórczości wywoływał wśród krytyków bardzo sprzeczne opinie. Między innymi znakomity krytyk Middleton zażądał komentarza do jego *Pustyni* (*The Waste Land*). Richards stoi na stanowisku, że poezja aluzyjna, poezja intelektualna stwarza nowe impulsy i rzeźbi nowe ślady w naszym umyśle. Formy tej poezji zbliżone są do frazy muzycznej. Richards określa technikę poezji współczesnej jako technikę muzyczną. Trudności z niej wynikające polegają na braku naszych zdolności recepcyjnych, nie leżą w intencjach Eliota. Jednakże możliwości recepcyjne czytelnika są zmienne, podlegają ewolucji. Richards odpiera również zarzut krytyków na temat powtarzania się pewnych stałych motywów i metafor w poezji Eliota. W poezji jego zachodzi jakiś właściwy mu proces centralny, związek pozornie sprzecznych idei i obrazów. Jednakże swoista konfiguracja tych obrazów nadaje im jedność. Toteż niektórzy czytelnicy odnajdą w poezji Eliota nie tylko beznadziejność właściwą obecnej generacji, ale i dążenie do wyzwolenia z katastrofizmu.

Jest rzeczą ciekawą, jak spostrzeżenia Richardsa sprzed lat 30 sprawdziły się dzisiaj i ugruntowały. Wielki angielski uczony potrafił w ramach swego dobrego smaku, zdrowego rozsądku i po-

stulatu ideowości sztuki właściwie ocenić największego współczesnego angielskiego poetę i dramaturga!

Praca Richardsa sprzed 35 lat posiada dzisiaj raczej już tylko wartość historyczną jako dokument psychologizmu i racjonalizmu w angielskiej teorii literatury. Była pierwszą próbą uwolnienia nauki o literaturze od elementów abstrakcyjnych i nadania jej cech dyscypliny empirycznej. Ocenienie jej z punktu widzenia marksistowskiej teorii badań literackich byłoby jednoznacznie negatywne, ale byłoby również i poważnym błędem metodologicznym. Sprzeczności, w które uwikłał się wybitny angielski teoretyk, wynikają z przyjętej przez niego metody. Jednakże jego racjonalizm utrzymuje go zawsze w granicach zdrowego rozsądku, a postulaty komunikatywności literatury, jej humanizmu i funkcji cywilizacyjnej nie utraciły po dziś dzień swej aktualności.

Wanda Lipiec, Łódź

Karel Štěpáník, BĀSNICKÉ DÍLO JOHNA KEATSE, Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, Praha 1958, 233 pp. „Opera Universitatis Brunensis“, Facultas Philosophica, vol. 51.

The main theme of the book by Karel Štěpáník, which appears in the period of growing interest in the life and work of John Keats, is in the author's words "a critical examination of the reflection of objective reality in the poet's mind and work", i. e., an investigation of the facts from Keats's life and time that entered into the process of poetic transmutation and were reflected in the ideas, subject-matter, vocabulary and versification of his poems. In his study the author makes ample use of the research work conducted by the biographers and critics of Keats up to the beginning of 1957 (at that time the manuscript was sent to the publishers), but always subjects the results of his predecessors to

careful evaluation and endeavours to give convincing answers to his problems either by supporting an existing theory by new arguments or by offering a new solution of his own. The backbone of his criticism is his belief in Keats as an honest young man, a keen observer of nature and human life in his country, and a supreme artist.

Two things must be borne in mind by the readers of the present work. First of all, it is intended to fill, at least partly, the gap in Czech studies of the English romantic movement, which have so far lacked not only a monograph on Keats, but also a fully representative anthology of his poems in translation. For this reason the book is written in Czech (with an English summary), the translation of poems and letters, quoted also as a rule in Czech, being in many cases the author's own work. For the benefit of Czech readers more space is assigned to some details of the poet's life and the ideas of other scholars are expounded more fully than it would be necessary for the sake of the author's arguments. Secondly, contrary to other authors on the subject, K. Štěpaník does not aim at an analysis of all Keats's poems in chronological order or at an exhaustive survey of the poet's experience and reading reflected in his work, but concentrates his attention upon elements that elucidate the general character of Keats's inspiration, the basic trends of his mind which make themselves manifest in drawing and selecting raw material from life and converting it into a work of art. He does not attempt to go into details of the process by which Keats's experience is transmuted into poetry, but wants to clear the grounds and build reliable foundations for a critical study of Keats's poetical achievement.

The author's conclusions are documented by biographical data and by analyses of poems and letters. As far as the poet's biography is concerned, K.

Štěpaník has obviously to rely on the research of other scholars. He does not, however, fail to make his voice heard on conjectures which, in his regard, are not sufficiently corroborated by evidence of Keats's poems.

The above-mentioned aims and restrictions are reflected in the division of the work into three formally independent studies. The first part of the book deals with the social background of Keats's poems, the second study analyses events of the poet's private life, and the last section examines the influence of art and literature on Keats's ideas and poetry.

The introductory study¹ expounds Keats's social and political views and interprets some aspects of his philosophy. The author examines the economic and political development of England during the poet's life, analyses the basic principles of the romantic method in general and of the English romantic movement in particular, traces the elements of Keats's radicalism throughout his poetical career and, finally, deals with the social aspect of Keats's humanism and romanticism and with his place among other romantic poets. In general, K. Štěpaník's conclusions correspond with those of R. M. Samarin² and A. A. Anikst³, especially in the interpretation of individual poems. However, having carefully examined the sources of Keats's denunciation of despotism and of his enthusiasm for all fighters for freedom, the author points out that the

¹ Its principal ideas reappeared in K. Štěpaník's article *The Reflection of Social Reality in Keats's Poems and Letters*, written in English and published in the „Brno Studies in English“, vol. 1, Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, Praha 1959 („Opera Universitatis Brunensis“, Facultas Philosophica, vol. 55), pp. 69–101.

² И. И. Анисимов, А. А. Елистратова, А. Ф. Иващенко [ред.]: *История английской литературы*, том II, выпуск первый, Москва 1953, p. 130–152.

³ А. А. Аникст: *История английской литературы*, Москва 1956, p. 251–255.

political and social beliefs of the poet were founded not so much on reason or on participation in the struggle against the tyrants as on sentiment, on his compassion with the oppressed people. Radical as Keats was in many aspects of his view of life, he cannot be ranked among revolutionaries.

K. Štěpaník does not subscribe to the views of Claude Lee Finney⁴ about Keats's frequent oscillation between various systems of thought. In his discussions of Keats's political creed he clearly indicates that the poet's philosophical development was indeed not devoid of minor reversals, but there was no substantial change in his view of life. The apparent inconsistencies in Keats's letters or poems can be explained away without recourse to repeated vacillations of his mind. The author believes that Keats's dissatisfaction with the world, displayed in some of his letters and poems, was generally due to some unpleasant private and subjective experience; in the latter part of his life it often was a symptom of pathological sensibility arising from his illness. Or, if the poet in the last years of his career tried to exclude critical allusions to contemporary politics from his verse and to confine them to his letters, there is no reason to suspect him of abandoning his radicalism; he reached a further stage of his poetical development, at which he began to eliminate all traces of didacticism from his poetry.

Analysing the sources of Keats's inspiration in *Hyperion*, K. Štěpaník delivers some interesting remarks on the problem of allegory in the poem. In his view, *Hyperion* is an expression of the poet's belief in continuous revolutionary progress of society, a poetic rendering of an idea suggested to Keats by the French Revolution. It does not, however, reflect historical events and fate of that

revolution; the fall of *Hyperion* represents neither the victory over feudalism nor the defeat of the new order. Elements of political allegory do not enter into the plot of the poem.

The second and most extensive part of the book is a study of the reflection of Keats's personal experience in his poetry. The author follows the course of events in the poet's life roughly in chronological order, with inserted chapters on Keats's friends, his brothers and sister, and his love-affairs. His criticism in this and the following study is founded on his ideas concerning the respective role of personal experience and literature in Keats's inspiration. The author states explicitly on several occasions that Keats's poetry, consciously or intuitively, reflects the political and social development in his age, his private life and his reading as three different but inseparable aspects of reality. Under different circumstances, however, one of the sources of inspiration may become especially prominent, and the literary critic can, by thorough analysis, determine its relative value.

In the present study K. Štěpaník elaborates this idea in his comment on the place of nature in Keats's poems. In his view nature, which is the embodiment of the poet's ideal of truth and beauty, the goal of his philosophical and aesthetic quest, is the primary source of Keats's poetry. The difficulties encountered in ascertaining the reflection of concrete natural and geographical phenomena in Keats's work are due to the fact that his poetry is the product of an intricate imaginative process, not a direct transcription of reality. Views of rocks, plants, animals and scenery press as raw material into Keats's mind and are subsequently modified by reminiscences from literature and painting and transmuted into a complex mosaic of experience and invention. The transmutation of experience is in many cases so involved that it frustrates our

⁴ Expressed in his book *The Evolution of Keats's Poetry*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Mass.) 1936.

attempts at ascertaining the objective reality which had evoked the imaginative process. For this reason attempts at identifying anonymous landscapes in Keats's poems with certain parts of the English countryside usually achieve only negative results, unless they are supported by external evidence.

On the other hand, it should be noted that Keats's mind was wonderfully adapted to the construction of mental images from reading, with only a meagre basis of personal experience. His imaginary landscapes were so true to life that his visits to places previously depicted from reading and imagination could not add anything substantial to the picture already delineated in his poems. The best example of this remarkable faculty are his descriptions of the rivers around Oxford in the first and of Skiddaw in the fourth book of *Endymion*.

Examining the influence of Leigh Hunt on Keats's poetic style and on his theory of art, K. Štěpaník avails himself of another opportunity to voice his opinion on the method and results of C. L. Finney, whose "biographical criticism" is broadly analogous with his own investigation of the sources of Keats's poetry. The author's arguments are here levelled against Finney's exaggeration of Keats's indebtedness to his literary predecessors. He repudiates most of Finney's parallels between Keats and Hunt by maintaining that Keats's vocabulary abounds in expressions whose frequency is relatively high not only in Hunt, but also in other contemporary and older poets, chiefly in those on whom Hunt himself modelled his work. Similarly, Keats's theory of poetry had its counterpart not only in Hunt's meditations on this subject, but also in the views of Hazlitt, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Shelley, and of a vast array of older continental and English poets, known to Keats from his own reading.

Another major problem discussed at

length is Keats's relation to Fanny Brawne and Isabella Jones. The author's reasoning is, as usual, based on the poet's own statements, which, in his opinion, may sometimes reflect only a passing state of mind, but are always honestly sincere. The cornerstone of his argument about Keats's love for Fanny, which the author interprets as an unconsummated affair, is the poet's letter to Charles Brown, dated November 1, 1820. The author's conception of Keats's honour and of his sincere love for Fanny makes him refute most of Gittings's⁵ alleged discoveries as hypothetical conjectures, which may gratify the insatiate curiosity of Keats's biographers, but as clues to a better understanding of the poet's work are misleading and even dangerous. Supported by the criticism of John Middleton Murry⁶, K. Štěpaník utterly rejects Gittings's conclusion that some poems hitherto considered as reflections of Keats's love for Fanny were inspired solely by his love affair with Isabella. He concedes, rather hesitatingly, that the poet's passion for Mrs. Jones may have resulted in more than mere friendship, but refuses to acknowledge its influence on Keats's poetry in other passages than those directly describing the carnal union of lovers (the nympholeptic dream in *Endymion* or stanza XXXVI of *The Eve of St. Agnes*). The analysis of Keats's inspiration in the latter poem is a typical illustration of the author's attitude to the crucial problem of the poet's amours: in his view, the poem is an objective account of Keats's passionate love for Fanny Brawne, tempered with the reminiscence of his sexual experience with, presumably but not certainly, Isabella Jones.

In the discussion of *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* K. Štěpaník makes some interesting observations on the source

⁵ R. Gittings, *John Keats: The Living Year*, London 1954.

⁶ In his *Keats*, London 1955.

of inspiration in epic poetry. Unlike Amy Lowell⁷, he believes that Keats's emotional experience at the time of the composition of the ballad (happiness springing from his love for Fanny, mixed with jealousy and the feeling of enslavement by his passion) made itself felt in the choice of the narrative plan, with its gloomy atmosphere and tragic denouement, and was reflected, in its most universal form, in the conception of love as a source both of joy and suffering. On the other hand, the individual incidents of the poem, which bear no direct relation to these feelings, should not be interpreted as symbols of the poet's personal experience; as in all Keats's epic poetry, they are largely the product of invention based on literary models and reminiscences.

The final study, which examines the literary sources of Keats's poetry, concentrates on a few basic or controversial issues. First of all, the author defines the methodological premises of his investigation, fully agreeing with Ridley⁸ that the establishment of literary indebtedness requires either unequivocal external evidence — the author's sincere confession or the testimony of his friends — or cumulative internal evidence. From this standpoint K. Štěpáník, although ready to admit the existence of frequent literary reminiscences in Keats's poetry, severely censures the method of Beyer⁹ or Finney¹⁰, which explained almost every idea or image in Keats's work by indebtedness to his literary predecessors. The author again emphasizes the specific character of the process of poetic transmutation, which makes the search for literary sources

extremely difficult and its results dubious. Even if a literary source is established above all doubt, parallels in ideas or their expression cannot in themselves justify the exclusion of the study of personal experience from any serious inquiry into the sources of inspiration.

In the discussion of Keats's indebtedness to music and to plastic arts, the author corroborates his idea of the close parallelism between nature and the works of art in the poet's inspiration by showing that not only the reflection of the two sources in Keats's verse is inseparably intertwined, but also their stimulative action follows the same pattern. Both sensual perceptions and literary reminiscences fill the poet's responsive mind with impressions, which — instead of description — convey the idea of the object to the reader. This is the source of suggestiveness in Keats's poetry, as opposed to the direct sensual appeal of the fine arts.

In the chapter on Keats's reading K. Štěpáník supplies the student of his book with complete lists of poems addressed to other poets and artists, of poems written on themes borrowed from other authors, and of poems inspired predominantly by literature, either directly or through Keats's interest in classical mythology. Other lists consist of names of artists mentioned or hinted at in Keats's poems and letters. These lists and the accompanying notes (such as that on almost one thousand authors Keats may have come across in Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*) attempt to reduce to absurdity some „proofs“ of Keats's indebtedness to various authors by demonstrating that Keats may have read almost all books in English, French and Latin, available in London during his lifetime.

K. Štěpáník's scepticism does not, however, prevent him from discovering a new source of *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* in Peacock's *Rhododaphne*. The

⁷ Her interpretation of the ballad may be found in her book *John Keats*, London 1925, vol. 2, p. 225 et seq.

⁸ M. A. Ridley, *Keats's Craftsmanship*, Oxford 1937.

⁹ W. W. Beyer, *Keats and the Daemon King*, Oxford University Press, London 1947.

¹⁰ *Op. cit.*

author, supporting his claim by similarities in the central idea and incidents and by parallelisms in versification and vocabulary of the two poems, constantly emphasizes the cumulative character of his evidence. His conclusions may be briefly summarized as follows: *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* was inspired by Keats's love for Fanny; its form, metaphors and vocabulary were suggested to the poet chiefly by literature; and, finally, the book whose elements are likely to have influenced Keats's poem more than any other work of art is *Rhododaphne*¹¹.

The final chapter of the study is devoted to an elaborate examination of Keats's indebtedness to Edmund Spenser. Although K. Štěpaník does not admittedly cover the whole ground common to the two writers, he introduces into his discussion all material which illuminates the basic attitude of Keats to his Elizabethan predecessor and to English poetry in general. He protests against Finney's interpretation of the *Imitation of Spenser* as a work totally reducible to various elements of Spenser's poetry. In his opinion, Keats tried to compose a poem similar to those which used to be published in anthologies of the so-called "beauties" from famous English poets.

At the beginning of Keats's poetical development his indebtedness to Spenser was most pronounced in the emotional atmosphere and vocabulary of his work. His theory of art and of beauty modelled on Spenser belongs to a later period, beginning with *Sleep and Poetry* and culminating in *Endymion*. The latter poem, which is an expression of Keats's personal quest for ideal truth and beauty and at the same time a reflection of the search for truth in all mankind, witnesses to the profound impression made

on the young poet by Spenser's neo-Platonic philosophy and by his belief in the moral purpose of art.

The poetical work of Edmund Spenser is the most permanent literary source which can be established in Keats's poetry. K. Štěpaník thus undertakes an especially rewarding task, when he collects evidence for his opinion that even in his relation to the author of *Faerie Queene* Keats always played the role of a transmuter of ideas through his own experience and never of a slavish imitator. This is the final reassertion of his belief in the poet's creative genius, which he has so vigorously maintained throughout his work on the poetry of John Keats.

As the book frequently returns to the discussion of the same persons, dealing with various aspects of their lives and ideas, and of the same poems, analyzing them from different standpoints, the absence of an index is to be gravely deplored on the part of the readers.

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Pierre Daix, SEPT SIÈCLES DE ROMAN, Paris [1955], Les Éditeurs Français Réunis, s. 484.

W wykazie bibliografii zamieszczonym obok karty tytułowej książki Piotra Daix znajdujemy kilka tytułów jego własnych powieści. Piotr Daix jest bowiem nie tylko popularnym publicystą, tłumaczem i eseistą, jest także powieściopisarzem. I nie tylko powieściopisarzem. Tytuł zbioru esejów-studiów krytycznych (publikowanych uprzednio na łamach „Les Lettres Françaises“) zdaje się sugerować, iż mamy do czynienia również z historykiem gatunku powieściowego. Ale nie. Autor zastrzega się kategorycznie przeciwko traktowaniu jego książki jako historii gatunku. Nie przyznaje się nawet do próby wytyczenia w niej głównych arterii rozwojowych powieści. Istotnie, chodzi tu o zagadnienie bardziej szcze-

¹¹ Keats's indebtedness to *Rhododaphne* is also the subject of K. Štěpaník's article *A Source of Keats's „La Belle Dame Sans Merci“*, written in English and published in „*Philologica Pragensia*“, I (1958), 4, pp. 104—115.